

**-DRAFT-
VERIS
Lessons Learned**

**Jan Fatouros,
Director DGS
Information Systems & Services**

Virginia Election Registration Information System – Project Closeout

- Agency: Virginia State Board of Elections (SBE)
- Purpose: Deliver an integrated systems solution that meets federal and state election mandates (National Voters Right Act, Help America Vote Act), including commercial software and implementation; hardware acquisition and deployment; training and software maintenance
- Project Director: Jan Fatouros, Project Manager: Nelly Romero
- Estimated Cost (Development Approval): \$17,129,396
- Actual Cost: \$12,000,000 (through project close out)
- Scheduled End of Execution: June 30, 2006
- Last Approved Baseline:
- Actual End of Execution: May 2007
- Issues: Deferred scope incorporated into VERIS ongoing program

Virginia Election & Registration Information System (VERIS)

- Provides full support for conducting all types of elections in Virginia
 - Voter Registration w Precinct Assignment
 - Absentee Processing
 - Election Support including Results Reporting
 - Poll Workers, Locations, Equipment
 - Redistricting/ *Precincting*
 - Information Distribution
- VERIS Supports
 - 134 Localities
 - 1 State Agency (SBE)
 - 4 Interface Agencies
- Federally mandated (HAVA) to be implemented by 11/2005 actual implementation 2/1/2007 (still phasing in functions)

Schedule: Planned to Actual

Title I and II Funds Available	6/2003, 8/2004 – Required application implemented NLT 11/2006
RFP Development - Contracting	1/2004 – 6/2004 9/2004-12/29/2004
VERIS Project Plan Approved	3/24/2005 (Project has 7 months to imp)
Business Requirements Use Cases	1/2005-6/2005
Delivery of Baseline Software	3/28/2005 – 7/21/2005
Virginia Specific Customization & Reports	5/11/05 10/2005-2/2006
Data Conversion Testing	All 134 Localities: 8/12/05 (10/2006)
VGIN Readiness	6 Localities: 5/6/05 All Localities: 8/25/05 – 9/2006 Removed GIS from Scope
User Acceptance testing (UAT) Complete – Fails Acceptance	9/12/05 11/2005 8/2005 – 12/2005; 7/2006 – 11/2006
Renegotiate Contract & New PM	12/2004-2/2006
GAP Analysis; Enhancement Requirements & Development	1/2006 – 6/2006 Street File 9/2006-2/2007
Full Deployment & Closeout	8/15/05 – 1/17/06 1/1/2007 -4/2007

Red indicates task additions/actual dates

Project Challenges

- Grant funded – with specific requirement commitments
- Initial Project Scope
 - New functionality
 - Unproven/unknown technology
 - High level of inter-agency dependencies
 - “Immoveable Deadline”
- Schedule not Inclusive
 - Excluded business tasks required for successful implementation
 - Ignored election cycle
 - Assumed baseline software product fully developed
- Proponent Agency Assessment
 - Last major implementation 1987
 - No IT or analytic staff at SBE
 - No plan to **dedicate** agency or locality resources
 - 20 plus elections conducted during the 2 years of the project
 - Assumed vendor would implement system without extensive user involvement

Roles & Responsibilities

(Prior to Reorganization)

- **Project Manager**
 - No authority over agency subject matter experts (SME), budget, or contractor
 - Selected for “book smarts” not leadership or experience
 - Non-state employee-Passed VITA PMD exams
- **Project Sponsor**
 - No expenditure authority; Limited authority over agency or locality staff
 - Anticipated spending 20% of time on project issues
 - Viewed role as “contract compliance” -De facto project manager
- **Agency Head**
 - Required to approve all expenditures (HAVA federal plan requirement)
 - Expected no organizational impact
- **Prime Contractor**
 - SBE Intended Prime to Lead Project Management Team
 - Failed to follow a proven methodology
 - Responsible for Integration **except**
 - Hardware & Data Center carved out to VITA
 - Election Night reporting carved out to Virginia Interactive
 - GIS Precinct assignment carved out to VGIN
 - Not included in Risk Reviews or AOC meetings

Project Organization

- PM failed to establish clear roles and accountability
- Core team had no dedicated SMEs
- Agency Oversight Committee
 - Chaired by Agency Head
 - No locality participation
 - No agenda, No minutes
 - Excluded Prime Contractor
- Cabinet Oversight Committee
 - Consistently informed by SBE that they “needed help”
 - Lacked authority to provide substantive assistance
 - SBE used committee to absolve themselves of accountability for project

Structural Issues

- Flexibility/Responsiveness
 - Governor, cabinet, ITIB cannot assign/redirect state resources (human or financial) to quickly address problem projects
- External Funding
 - IT project commitments made to external entities without ITIB approval
- Procurement Process
 - High level/non-specific requirements vs Project's need for very detailed highly specific requirements
 - Fixed price contracting prior to detailed requirements/design
- IT project perspective vs Program perspective
 - Many necessary tasks for project success are “out-of-scope” for the IT project plan & PM focus

Suggestions

Project Initiation

- Grant (external funding) proposals with IT components should be approved by ITIB prior to submission to grantor.
- Governor needs authority to reassign Senior IT managers & project managers as needed.
- A detailed analysis of agency readiness and ability to execute should be a heavily weighted part of risk assessment. Mitigation of deficiencies should be addressed prior to awarding development approval

Suggestions

Project Planning

- VITA needs to develop solicitation processes that allow for vendor selection and full requirements definition/gap analysis prior to fixing development price.
- Prime contractors should be allowed to negotiate with NG for data center services/costs either as part of RFP or as part of contract negotiation.
- Project teams should have dedicated business analysts/subject matter experts
- Plans should include business related tasks critical to implementation success
- Mandatory deadline projects should limit scope to essential functionality.
- Multi-phased projects should be encouraged

Suggestions

Control Phase

- Project Management
 - Major projects should not “outsource” project management
 - Major project PMs should be evaluated for both process knowledge and leadership ability
 - PM authority should be clear– and include:
 - budget, vendor relationship management, project team direction and assignment including control of SME time and tasks
 - Projects with aggressive deadlines require a dedicated project sponsor or project director
 - Project failures should have substantive consequences for PMs, project sponsors and agency heads
 - Major projects require active risk assessment committees with PMD participation

Summary

- Naturalist John Muir once said, "Tug on anything in Nature, and you find it is connected to everything else."
- IT projects affect and are affected by the efforts of IT and the business – success requires us to focus on business capabilities and capacity as well as IT execution